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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAMAKO 000321

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PGOV KDEM ML

SUBJECT: IN HASTE, MALI POSTS FLAWED LOCAL ELECTION RESULTS
TO INTERNET

Classified By: Political Officer Aaron Sampson, Embassy Bamako,
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1.(SBU) Summary: On May 26 the Ministry of Territorial Administration posted to its website a 700 page PDF file with nationwide results for Mali's April 26 local elections. The document provides comprehensive election data for all of Mali's 703 local communes. An informal analysis by the Embassy of election returns from Bamako revealed that results from four of Bamako's six communes recorded not one spoiled ballot out of more than 193,000 ballots cast. Results from some of the most far flung areas of northern Mali tell a slightly different story of impossibly inflated participation rates among an electorate that is presumably poorly educated, dispersed across the desert, and largely nomadic. An official at the Ministry of Territorial Administration told the Embassy that his Ministry had been pressured by the Presidency to post the election results and that the "official" document now on the web was officially flawed.

End Summary.

In Rush for Transparency, Mali Trips

2.(U) The 700 page document now posted to the Ministry of Territorial Administration's (MACTL) website provides numbers of registered voters, actual voters, and voided ballots for all of Mali's 703 local communes as well as the distribution of votes cast for each candidate and political party list. Participation rates in Bamako ranged from a high of 35 percent in Bamako's Commune II to a low of 15 percent in Commune IV. The average participation rate for Bamako was 22 percent.

3.(U) Nearly 8 percent of ballots cast in Bamako's Commune I were declared void and 3.5 percent in Commune III. In Bamako's other four communes, no voided ballots were recorded out of more than 193,000 votes cast. An analysis of the vote distribution per candidate for these communes, however, squares with the number of ballots meaning that all votes have been accounted for and nothing is missing from the tallies provided.

4.(C) When asked how 193,000 people in Bamako could manage to vote without spoiling a single ballot, the MACTL's Director of Elections, Fousennyi Coulibaly, told the Embassy that the Presidency and the MACTL's Secretary General had pressured the MACTL's information office into posting the results to quell fraud allegations emanating from certain political parties. Coulibaly readily admitted the numbers were flawed and even pointed out some additional errors in the voting data from Mali's western region of Kayes. Coulibaly said these errors were brought to his attention by two opposition parties. Actual vote tallies are still waiting to be certified by local magistrates who preside over Mali's 49 circles and Bamako's six communes. An ongoing

magistrates strike has delayed this certification (septel). Coulibaly said he had already recommended removing the document from the internet pending more accurate information from local authorities, but was uncertain whether his superiors would take this advice.

Democracy at Work in Northern Mali

5.(SBU) According to the Ministry of Territorial Administration's statistics, election turnout in Kidal bordered on 50 percent, in Gao 58 percent, and in Timbuktu surpassed 60 percent. The vast majority of numbers from northern Mali's 97 communes appear, at least on the surface, to be reasonable. Voided ballot numbers and participation rates in a few of northern Mali's most isolated communes, however, are suspect. Several extremely distant rural communes in Kidal and Gao had very few, or one case zero, voided ballots. Ballots in these communes generally offered voters limited choices as candidates were either running unopposed or against just one or two opponents. Ballots in Bamako, by way of comparison, were cluttered with the logos and symbols of as many as 28 different campaign lists. Although northern communes with more candidates to choose from seemed to have more spoiled ballots, this correlation broke down in several places such as the communes of Bankiane and Dianke in Timbuktu were 11.5 and 12.4 percent of ballots were voided even though there were only four candidate lists on the ballot.

6.(SBU) Participation rates in several distant northern

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communes with candidates running unopposed were unbelievably high. In the extremely isolated and vast commune of Tidermene, which is north of Menaka in the region of Gao, more than 96 percent of Tidermene's 9,100 registered voters voted for the one candidate on the ballot. The story was similar in the commune of Alata, another isolated commune near Menaka, where 92 percent of the commune's 10,000 registered voters cast ballots. In Boughessa in Kidal 86 percent of the commune's 1,943 voters voted for one candidate running unopposed. In Kidal's Intadjedite commune 75 percent of 2,700 voters all managed to vote for the same candidate without spoiling a single ballot. In Inekar, which is to the east of Menaka, 92 percent of nearly 8,800 registered voters chose between two candidate lists on election day.

7.(SBU) Northern Mali communes like Tidermene, Alata, Boughessa, and Inekar cover vast and largely empty geographic expanses without a single paved road or town. The distances between settlements and encampments in these communes are enormous. After factoring in the well-known inaccuracies of Mali's voter rolls, it is difficult to believe that so many rural and likely nomadic voters turned out to vote for what was in many cases a fait accompli. Participation rates were also high in communes with actual electoral competition. In the commune of Salam, which covers the entire empty space north of Timbuktu through Taoudenni all the way to the Algerian border, 91 percent of 16,473 voters went to the polls to choose between 15 competing candidate lists.

Comment: Numbers in Bamako and Northern Mali

8.(C) The raw voting data for Bamako posted by the Ministry of Territorial Administration is clearly incorrect. It is curious that the Ministry even has such information to release given that election results have yet to be certified by judicial officials at the local level. Election data from northern Mali is more interesting than troubling since results from the majority of northern Mali's 97 communes are within reason. Election returns that go beyond reasonable provide some insight into what may have actually occurred on

election day in some of the most remote and isolated corners of northern Mali. Either local politicians and election officials in distant locales achieved the Herculean feat of mobilizing a poorly educated and generally nomadic electorate living in encampments scattered across the desert, or they employed a few short cuts to ensure that nearly everyone listed as a registered voter performed, one way or another, their civic duty on election day.

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